

to express his views at great length; a report of which will be published hereafter.

iminary observations, said that he was opposed to the 21st rule, and in favor of receiving all these petitions; and should, therefore, vote against the rule. He believed the right of petition to be a constitutional right, and that the most injurious consequences had resulted from restraining it. He said for some time past there had been the opinion that there had been some mismanagement on this subject, so far as southern interests were concerned, and that a change of policy had now become necessary. To show the unconstitutionality of any restriction on the right of petition, he would just refer to the case of the District of Columbia. If apprehended that anybody would deny that the citizens of this District had the constitutional right to petition Congress on this subject; but this rule prevented them from doing so. Some of his southern friends had taken the ground that in this country there was no such thing as the right of petition. Because the people, being sovereigns, had a right to instruct their representatives their servants. Now he should like to know what sovereign rights the people of this District had. They could not elect a member of Congress, nor vote for a President, nor exercise any other right of sovereignty. All that was left them was the right of petition, which this 21st rule restricted. He was, however, told that the people of the District could not desire the legislation of Congress on this subject. But this did not alter the question; for whether the people desire to petition or not, Congress had no power to take away the right from them.

In regard to the manner of treating these petitions, he agreed with the gentleman from New-York (Mr. Beardsley), that the Congress should be bound to receive them, and give them a respectful hearing, they were by no means bound to grant the prayers contained in them. They had the right to reject the prayer, though bound to receive the petition. There was no country in which the right of petition did not exist. In England it was unlimited, and the liberal party there always planted themselves on that object. But it was objected by some of his southern friends, that, to claim the right of petition, the petitioners must have redress of grievances to petition for, which these abolition petitioners had not. Now, what were their grievances? Were they not the judges? If the government assumed to itself the right to judge of what was the grievance, what was the use of it? It would destroy the right of petition, for the petitioners themselves must have the right to judge of and state their grievances. That being done, Congress, after hearing the petition, might decide that the subject embraced in it was not a grievance. They had a right to reject the petition, but at all events, they were bound to give the petitioner a respectful hearing. If he did not believe in the reception and reference of abolition petitions would ever do any harm to the South. Until there should be a majority of the House favorable to the prayers of such petitions, he did not care how many came in; and when there should be such majority, every man must see that their first action on this subject would be followed up by a dissolution of the Union. He had, however, no such apprehensions. He took it for granted, that there was too much good sense

miles square. He believed that the course taken by gentlemen of the South on this subject had given the abolitionists great advantage over them. Look at

the votes here in favor of the right of petition. Did gentlemen believe that those who voted in this way were abolitionists? For his part, he had no reason to believe that there was an abolitionist on that floor. After expressing his approbation of the remarks of the gentlemen from New-York and Maine, (Messrs. Beardsley and Hamilton), he declared himself to have on this subject brought to a direct vote in the House in order to see who were for preserving the compromises in the Constitution, and who were against it. He believed that a majority of the North stood on the same grounds with the gentlemen from New-York and Maine; and he therefore had no fears of legislating on it. The southern gentlemen were calculated to injure their friends in the North in a delicate and dangerous position at home which they could not sustain; and as it was of no manner of advantage to the South, he hoped they would recede from it. It was known that the South stood in a position somewhat delicate in reference to our foreign relations. England, who had abolished slavery in her West India Islands, was seeking to interfere with the institution in other countries, though she had several millions of slaves in her East India possessions. He had no reliance on the sincerity of the British Government.

Mr. Holmes asked if the gentleman would permit him to give him a piece of information. Mr. C. assenting, and yielding the floor for that purpose, Mr. H. said he had learned from unquestioned authority, that the British Colonial Government of Madras had, by an order in council of last May, taken steps to liberate their East India slaves.

Mr. Clingman continued. He thought the South

They had no right to object to the reception and reference of these petitions. They should not, by their course, irritate those who were already too

much excited on the subject. Mr. C. in conclusion, deprecated the excitement which designing persons, both at the North and the South, had endeavored to create on this subject, and gave it as his opinion that the best way to allay it was to receive the petitions, and let them take the ordinary course.

Mr. Duncan expressed the desire to make a few remarks on the subject, and moved that the House adjourn; which motion was carried without a division: and

The House adjourned.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6.

The unfinished business of yesterday was the motion in relation to the report of the select committee on the Rules of the House; which was pending at the adjournment yesterday, on which the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. Duncan) was entitled to the floor.

Mr. T. Smith offered an amendment to the amendment, as follows:

Petitions, memorials, resolutions, and other papers, praying the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, or any State or Territory, or the slave trade between the States and Territories of the United States in which it now exists, shall all be received and laid upon the table, or referred, as the House may direct, without debate.

The Speaker replied that the amendment had been read for the information of the House.

Mr. Duncan discussed the subject pending during the hour allotted him, when

Mr. A. V. Brown next occupied the floor, when Mr. Giddings asked him to yield him the floor to enable him to answer his colleague, (Mr. Duncan.)

Mr. A. V. Brown replied that the gentleman from Ohio could answer his colleague at another time as well as now.

Mr. Giddings. Will the gentleman allow me ten minutes?

Mr. A. V. Brown wished, before he answered the gentleman, to inquire whether the debate would continue, after the expiration of the morning hour.

The Speaker informed the gentleman that the debate was limited to the morning hour, and that would expire in ten minutes.

Mr. A. V. Brown then yielding the floor, remarked that it would no doubt be considered very liberal in him to allow the gentleman from Ohio two of his ten minutes.

Mr. Giddings said he was under an obligation to his colleague for the question he had propounded, and he should respond to it with pleasure.

